

## **Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update**

September 1 – 30, 2007

The following is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and in New Mexico on the Gila National Forest (GNF), collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction Area (BRWRA). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR). Other entities cooperate through the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the 3-month wolf distribution map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the “Wolf Location Information” heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

**Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to:** (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 800-352-0700.

**Numbering System:** Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

**Definitions:** For the purposes of the Monthly Update, a “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

### **CURRENT POPULATION STATUS**

At the end of September, the collared population consisted of 25 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 11 packs and five single wolves. The pup count information has not changed since last month’s update. Other uncollared wolves, are known to be associating with

wolves having radio collars, as well as being separate from known packs.

At the end of 2006, there were 59 wolves throughout the BRWRA in New Mexico and Arizona. Of those, 46 were born in the wild.

## **IN ARIZONA:**

### **Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521 and f1042)**

During the first part of September, the IFT located the pack on the FAIR. On the September 24 telemetry flight, the IFT located the pack on the ASNF.

### **Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and uncollared AF486)**

Throughout September, the IFT located AM619 in its traditional home range in the north and central portion of the ASNF.

### **Paradise Pack (collared M1044, M1045 and M795)**

Throughout September, the IFT located the pack in the northwest portion of the BRWRA on the FAIR. On September 2, the IFT observed four adult-sized wolves.

During September, IFT continued to obtain three ground locations for the pack per week and provided wolf location updates to the permittee. The IFT continued supplying supplemental feeding stations in an effort to draw the wolves away from existing sheep grazing areas. On September 30, the permittee removed the sheep from the area as part of the permittee's regularly scheduled seasonal movements.

### **Rim Pack (collared AF858 and f1048)**

Throughout September, the IFT located the pack within its traditional home range in the central portion of the ASNF. During September, the IFT set foothold traps in an attempt to capture and fit potential pups with radio collars.

## **ON THE FAIR:**

### **Bacho Pack (collared AM990)**

Throughout September, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR.

### **Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)**

Throughout September, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR.

## **IN NEW MEXICO:**

### **Aspen Pack (collared AF667, M863 and f1046)**

Throughout September, the IFT located the pack north of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness with f1046 located separate from the pack on the September 24 telemetry flight.

### **Durango Pack (collared AM973)**

Throughout September, the IFT located AM973 in the northeastern portion of the GNF. During

September, a permittee located tracks near a residence likely belonging to AM973. The IFT went to the area on several occasions to haze the wolf from the area, but they were not able to locate the wolf. The IFT offered the resident the use of non-lethal hazing methods such as fladry (a visual and physical deterrent to canids) and Radio-Activated Guard (RAG) boxes.

**Luna Pack (collared AM583, f1047 and uncollared AF562)**

Throughout September, the IFT located the Luna pack in the central portion of the GNF, with f1047 located separate from AM583.

**Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871 and AF861)**

Throughout September, the IFT located the pack in the northeastern portion of the Gila Wilderness.

**San Mateo Pack (collared AF903)**

During September, the IFT located AF903 in the west central portion of the GNF and in central portion of the Apache National Forest (ANF).

**F923 (collared)**

Throughout September, the IFT located F923 with M992 in the central portion of the GNF.

**M992 (collared)**

Throughout September, the IFT located M992 with F923 in the central portion of the GNF.

**m1038 (collared)**

During September, the IFT located m1038 in the northwestern portion of the ANF in the San Mateo pack territory.

**m1039 (collared)**

During September, the IFT located m1039 in the northwestern portion of the ANF in the San Mateo pack territory. On the September 24 telemetry flight, the IFT located m1039 in the eastern portion of the ANF.

**f1040 (collared)**

Throughout September, the IFT located f1040 south and southwest of the traditional Aspen pack home range, in the eastern portion of the Gila Wilderness and in the northern portion of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

**INCIDENTS**

On September 4, the IFT received a report of a dead calf in Apache County, Arizona. The investigation revealed the calf was stillborn, and the IFT observed coyotes feeding on the carcass.

On September 19, the IFT received a report from the AGFD of an injured horse in Navajo County, Arizona, that the owner suspected to have been injured by a wolf or a mountain lion. The investigation revealed that the injuries were caused by running into a fence, but the IFT was

not able to determine why the horse ran into the fence due to lack of evidence.

### **CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT**

On September 26, the IFT and employees of the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility captured the seven Saddle pack pups for their last round of vaccinations. All seven pups were in good health.

### **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

On September 4, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 10 members of the Gila Valley Natural Resources Conservation District meeting in Safford, Arizona.

On September 8, Dan Groebner provided a wolf project update to 14 volunteers assisting in a graduate student scat collection study at Hannagan Meadow Lodge near Alpine, Arizona.

On September 17, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 14 employees of the Black Range Ranger District in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico.

On September 18, Shawna Nelson provided a wolf project update and addressed issues and concerns with 23 employees of the Quemado Ranger District in New Mexico.

On September 23, NMDGF employees provided a Gaining Access Into Nature (GAIN) program in New Mexico to four participants spending a day with a wolf biologist in the field.

On September 24, John Oakleaf provided a wolf project update to approximately 100 students and wildlife professionals at the Wildlife Society's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Tucson, Arizona.

On September 26, Shannon Barber-Meyer provided a presentation on Mexican wolf reintroduction outreach efforts to approximately 80 students and wildlife professionals at the Wildlife Society's 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Tucson.

### **USFWS to Evaluate Amending its Mexican Wolf Recovery and Reintroduction Program**

On August 7, the USFWS announced that it would begin a scoping process to gather input on potential modifications to its rule that established a recovery and reintroduction program for the Mexican gray wolf.

A Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Socio-economic Assessment for the Proposed Amendment of the Rule Establishing a Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf in Arizona and New Mexico was published in the *Federal Register* August 7. Public meetings will be held in November and December 2007 throughout Arizona and New Mexico.

All comments and input received from now until the end of the year will be used to prepare a draft proposed rule, a draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a Socio-economic Assessment. Once drafted, those documents will also go through a public review process.

Through the public scoping meetings, comments or suggestions are being sought from the public, concerned government agencies, Tribes, the scientific community, industry, ranchers, landowners or any other interested parties concerning pertinent issues that should be addressed and alternatives that should be analyzed. To promulgate a proposed rule and prepare a draft Environmental Impact Statement, including an assessment of socio-economic impacts all comments and any additional information received will be taken into consideration. All comments, including names and addresses, will become part of the supporting record and will be made public.

The notice can be found on the Web at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf/>. Submit written comments directly to the USFWS New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office on or before December 31, 2007, or at any of the 12 scoping meetings to be held in November and December 2007. Send comments to Brian Millsap, State Administrator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, New Mexico Ecological Services Field Office, 2105 Osuna NE, Albuquerque, NM 87113. Written comments may also be sent by facsimile to (505) 346-2542 or by e-mail to R2FWE\_AL@fws.gov. Guidance on sending comments is in the notice.

Questions regarding the scoping process or development of a proposed rule amending the 1998 final rule should be directed to John Morgart at (505) 346-2525. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 1-800-877-8339, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Each informal public information session will be held from 5 to 6 p.m., presentation of known issues will be conducted from 6 to 6:30 p.m. and the actual scoping meeting will take place from 6:30 till 9 p.m. Locations are as follows:

November 26, 2007: Flagstaff, AZ	December 3, 2007: Alamogordo, NM
November 27, 2007: Hon-Dah, AZ	December 4, 2007: Las Cruces, NM
November 28, 2007: Alpine, AZ	December 5, 2007: Glenwood, NM
November 29, 2007: Grants, NM	December 6, 2007: Safford, AZ
November 30, 2007: Albuquerque, NM	December 7, 2007: Tucson, AZ
December 1, 2007: Socorro, NM	December 8, 2007: Phoenix, AZ

The USFWS will provide reminder notifications that will include specific address information prior to the public information sessions, issue presentations, and scoping meetings.

### **PROJECT PERSONNEL**

Mike Godwin, AGFD Wildlife Manager Supervisor, began a temporary duty assignment with the Mexican Wolf Interagency Field Team.

The AGFD biologist position closed and candidate selections are being reviewed for interviews.

## **REWARDS OFFERED**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 and the Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations have pledged an additional \$35,000, for a total reward amount of up to \$46,000, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the White Mountain Apache Tribe at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; Arizona Game and Fish Department Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or New Mexico Department of Game and Fish Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act, and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.